



Everything plus the kitchen sink: Faculty experiences in global service-learning

Richard Kiely, Director of Center for Community Engaged Learning and Research, Cornell University [rck6@cornell.edu]

Jenny Nelson, Coordinator for SMART program, Cornell University [jmn99@cornell.edu]

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Summary

This qualitative study examined the faculty experience in quality global service-learning (GSL), specifically: faculty motivations, roles, activities; faculty development of course and program models; and faculty challenges related to curricular, institutional, and community relationships. The research sampled 30 faculty who teach in 15 distinct two and four year institutions of higher education and who facilitate GSL in a total of 25 different countries.

The results of the study were analyzed through Kiely's (2007) four-lens faculty development model. Kiely's (2007) model contends that faculty who practice service-learning over time develop their understanding of service-learning within four domains: 1) pedagogy, 2) community-based research, 3) institutional structures and 4) community development. Findings suggest that faculty experience each domain along a continuum from weak through robust in both theory and practice.

In terms of faculty experience with GSL pedagogy, a number of faculty engage in reflective practice but struggle to incorporate reflection into the GSL course. Faculty tend to bring a strong disciplinary lens but lack a deeper understanding of research, learning outcomes, pedagogical models, theoretical frameworks, reflection strategies, and assessment strategies. Study findings suggest that institutional support is often lacking and with few exceptions, the GSL experience is viewed by the institution as marginal to the core curriculum. Student and programmatic crises are common, but faculty lack training and a sense of competence in addressing these crises.

The study further suggests that faculty are wary of incorporating research into GSL courses and programs. Some faculty engage in research on dimensions of the GSL program but do not see their participation as an opportunity to conduct different types of GSL research, i.e., research regarding student experience, research leading to publication, or research that benefits community partners.

The study findings also suggest that faculty are not comfortable with negotiating and maintaining community partnerships. The community is often not involved in decisions related to the curriculum, and resource difference between the campus and community cause either frustration or tension. Faculty often lack time and resources and defer logistical, safety, housing and transportation aspects of the partnership to community partners. Of note, very few programs are sustained beyond one or two years.

References

Kiely, R. (2007). Service-learning as reflective practice: A four lens model. In P. Horrigan (Ed.), *Extending our reach: Voices in service-learning at Cornell* (pp. 64–70). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University's Public Service Center.